

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Wilmot School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004-2005**

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Date of Report: March 4, 2005

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- B – District/Agency Instructional Staff Information
- C – Suspension and Expulsion Information
- D – Statewide Assessment Information
- E – Enrollment Information
- F – Placement Alternatives
- G – Disabling Conditions

- H – Exiting Information
- Parent Survey, referrals, publications of child find Notices
- Comprehensive plan
- Yearly child find results

Promising practices

The steering committee concluded the district's staff has participated in a yearly Data Retreat in which the staff examine and analyze student data, professional practices, programs and structures, and parent and community involvement. The district then records this information and uses it to develop strategies and goals for school improvements.

The steering committee concluded the district uses Success Maker daily with all kindergarten through 6th grade students. They receive 15 minutes of reading and math. The 7th and 8th graders use the math program daily and the 5th and 6th grade students use it for science weekly.

The district uses Reading Recovery with success for students.

The Upward Bound Program is used for students. They qualify for the program by income, or if their parents did not attend college. High school students can participate in a 6 week program over the summer at Northern State University with a curriculum geared for different classes that strengthens the high school curriculum and the student's confidence. Some program activities run throughout the school year.

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the school district has in place appropriate procedures for child find for student's Birth-21. The public is informed by newspaper articles, newsletters, and schedules are sent home for preschool child find activities. Individual invitations are also mailed to the parents with times. Wilmot maintains a census of children birth through five years old who live in the district. The Wilmot district meets the needs of all students in the referral process.

The steering committee concluded the district's comprehensive plan addresses procedures, public awareness campaign, documentation, child count and screening as well parental due process rights following referral and informal review.

Teachers are given copies of each child's IEP they will have in their class. After each IEP for students during the school year teachers are updated with goals and modifications for students.

The steering committee concluded the Wilmot District meets the requirements for certified staff. Special education staff development and training are driven by the student's needs and disabilities. Paraprofessionals are well trained and kept up to date.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee findings under general supervision. The district initiated a comprehensive data retreat in order to analyze student achievement, professional practices, present programs and parent and community involvement in 2002. This data analysis continues to be updated on a yearly basis. The district then incorporates the services of a curriculum coordinator and the information retrieved from the district staff's analysis of student test scores and classroom grades to drive the district's professional and curriculum development. Through teacher and administrative interviews the monitoring team determined that this data has been the primary focus which drives the selection of new textbooks, implementing and expanding programs such as Success Maker and the selection of professional development opportunities.

Through interview of staff and administration, the monitoring team agrees with the steering committee findings in that the district provides a variety of programs in order to provide a free appropriate public education for all students. The district uses Success Maker, Reading Recovery and Upward Bound to increase the educational opportunities for their students.

Meets requirements

Trough interview of staff, the monitoring team concurs with the steering committee findings which meet requirement under general supervision. The district has child find procedures in place; their comprehensive plan addresses parental rights, referral procedures and staff development, and their special education teachers are certified in the area of special education.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State Tables C,E,F,K, L, M, N
- Age at referral
- Number of students screened
- Personnel development education
- Preschool age
- School age
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- Comprehensive plan
- Surveys

Promising practice

The steering committee concluded the Wilmot School District provides free appropriate public education for all students including preschool and kindergarten. The district has a preschool for students four years of age at no cost to the parents. It is held four half days a week in coordination with head start. All students in the district are encouraged to attend and the district also has an all day every day kindergarten program.

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the school district provides FAPE for children birth through 21 as determined by their IFSP and IEP needs. The district follows state and federal regulations accordingly to ensure FAPE for all students.

The steering committee concluded the district has had no students suspended or expelled. Policies are in place to address this issue should the need arise.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Through interview with administration, the monitoring team can concur with the steering committee findings in the area of free appropriate public education. Wilmot School District operates a preschool program which is open to all 4 year old students within the district at no cost to the parent.

Through interview with the special education teacher and administration, the monitoring team also validates the district's all day every day kindergarten as a promising practice in that a kindergarten student with a disability and who is receiving services through special education can receive intervention on a more regular basis. Teachers report they have seen this frequency of intervention benefit students with disabilities.

The monitoring team cannot validate the benefits of all day every day kindergarten for students with no disabilities in that there is no data to support the long term effects of such a program because the program is only two years old.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team validated through interview and review of data tables that the district meets the requirements for the provision of a free appropriate public education.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables G,H,I,J
- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parent Teacher report forms
- Initial referral

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district follows state and federal regulations during the evaluation process. The district provided parents written notice five days prior to proposing or refusing to initiate or change the child's identification or evaluations, including transition, all files had parent permission, and multidisciplinary team reports were available in 100% of the files with students with learning disabilities. Parent surveys indicate they receive copies of test results, test results are explained so they understand and they receive copies of evaluation reports.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded the district needs improvement in the area of completing comprehensive evaluations. A comprehensive evaluation was completed in nine out of ten files.

Out of compliance

The steering committee concluded the district does not consistently record parental participation into the evaluation process. A parental input form is used and generally the information is included in the psychologist's report. In six out of ten files there was no evidence of parental input.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through file review, the monitoring team can validate the steering committee findings in the area evaluations. Five of five files reviewed which required a multidisciplinary team report contained the report and the appropriate team membership was present for the meeting. Prior notices for consent to evaluate and for meetings were found in all files reviewed and timelines for notifications were consistently met.

Needs improvement

Through file review, the monitoring team could not validate the steering committee finding in the area of parent input in the evaluation process as being out of compliance. Parent input was documented in eight of eight files which required parent input during the evaluation process. The district must continue to obtain, document and use input from the student's parents in determining what additional data, if any are needed, to determine whether the student has a particular category of disability.

The monitoring team cannot validate the steering committee findings in evaluating in all areas of suspected disability as a needs improvement area. In eight of eight files reviewed, the student was evaluated in all areas of suspected disability as stated on the prior notice/consent to evaluate.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:30:04 Prior Notice and parent consent. Informed parental consent must be obtained before conducting a first-time evaluation, reevaluation, and before initial placement of a child in a program providing special education or special education and related services.

Through file review of eight files requiring evaluation, the monitoring team determined the district did not receive consent for an articulation evaluation which was conducted in one file. In a second file, the district listed ability as an area to be evaluated on the prior notice/consent to evaluate form, but then brought forth the previous ability score rather than evaluate in the area of ability.

Issues requiring immediate attention

ARSD 24:05:22:03. Certified child. A certified child is a child in need of special education or special education and related services who has received a multidisciplinary evaluation and has an individual education program formulated and approved by a local placement committee. Documentation supporting a child's disabling condition as defined by Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must be maintained by the school district for verification of its annual federal child count. This definition applies to all eligible children ages 3 to 21, inclusive, and to only those children under the age of 3 who are in need of prolonged assistance.

ARSD 24:05:25:05 Eligibility and placement procedures. In interpreting evaluation data for the purpose of determining eligibility and in making placement decisions, each school district shall draw upon information from a variety of sources, including aptitude and achievement tests, teacher recommendations, physical condition, social or cultural background, and adaptive behavior and shall ensure that information obtained from all of these sources is documented and carefully considered.

Through file review, the monitoring team identified one student who was listed on the child count as being eligible under the category of mental retardation but the student did not meet the eligibility criteria for this disability category. The student's scores are as follows:

Ability: Full Scale 71-83	Achievement: Reading 85	Adaptive: Teacher 81
Verbal 76-88	Writing 75	Parent 77
Performance 69-85	Math 79	

Medical documentation was in file.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State Table L and M
- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parental Right document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Public awareness information
- FERPA disclosure

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district consistently follows procedural safeguards. Parental surveys and file reviews indicate parents are notified of their rights, consent is obtained prior to placement and policies are in place to address parental inspection and reviewing of their child's records. The district also has policies and procedures place in the event a child needs a surrogate parent.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through interview and file review, the monitoring team concurs with the steering committee findings in the area of procedural safeguards. The district has addressed surrogate parent, obtained parental consent for placement for all students receiving services through special education, and has policies and procedures in place for the inspection and reviewing of records.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Parent Surveys
- Student Surveys
- Comprehensive Plan
- Teacher file reviews
- Personnel Training
- Budget information

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district consistently adheres to the IEP process. Prior notices are consistently provided to the parents within the five day guidelines, parents are invited to the IEP meetings, transition and transition evaluation is addressed according to federal guidelines, and teachers are provided with copies of the IEPs. IEPs are reviewed on an annual basis. The district consistently and satisfactorily meets the IEP content requirement including goals which link to present level of performance which link to the functional assessment. Goals are skill based and measurable. Extended school year is addressed and parent input is consistently recorded. Transition is consistently addressed and is student centered. The steering committee also agreed that the district documented the beginning date of service to be as soon as possible after the IEP was developed.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded the district does not consistently or adequately document justification of placement as per file review. Student surveys also indicate that they feel teachers could do more in the area of modifying school work which is too difficult for them.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through review of 16 files, the monitoring team concurs with all of the steering committee findings under meets requirement in the area of Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Needs improvement

The monitoring team cannot validate the student survey conclusion that they feel teachers could do more in the area of modifying work that is too difficult for them. Through file review, modifications were consistently addressed on the modification page of the IEP. Through staff interview, the monitoring team concluded the teachers attended IEP meetings and/or were consistently made aware of what specific modifications were needed by each student with a disability in order to make progress in the general curriculum.

Through file review, the monitoring team concluded the district consistently addresses how the disability affects the student's progress in the general curriculum on the Present Level of Performance. In five of fourteen files reviewed the district did not adequately address how the student's disability affects his/her progress in the general curriculum. Such statements as "student needs these skills in order to be a better reader and writer in all settings...." does not address how the disability affects his/her progress in the general curriculum. How to better and more consistently address this area on the Present Level of Performance was discussed through technical assistance during the staff review of files. Therefore, the district needs to continue to make improvements in this area.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:28:03. Justification in determining placements. The school district shall explain why a child with a disability is removed from education in age-appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general curriculum.

Through file review, the monitoring team concluded in nine of the fifteen files reviewed did not adequately address why or what the student needed that could not be provided in the regular classroom. A justification statement such as “due to the student’s ability to work in the regular classroom effectively with modifications, support and assistance from the resource room” does not address why the student receives services for 4 hours per week in the resource room. A justification statement such as “student will benefit from 1:1 instruction to show progress...student may come to have tests read orally” also does not address why or what he/she needs that require him/her to be removed from the regular classroom.

ARSD 24:05:27:12. Graduation requirements. The instructional program shall be specified on the individual educational program. The individual educational program shall state specifically how the student in need of special education or special education and related services will satisfy the district's graduation requirements. Parents must be informed through the individual educational program process at least one year in advance of the intent to graduate their child upon completion of the individual educational program and to terminate services by graduation.

Through file review, the monitoring team concluded the district did not consistently address graduation requirements at least one year in advance of the graduation day and state specifically how the student will meet the district’s graduation requirements. Of the two files requiring graduation to be addressed in the IEP, one file met the time requirement but not the content. The second file did not meet the one year requirement or the content requirement. Rather than listing only the specific classes the student still needs to successfully complete for the district’s graduation requirements, the district reiterated the course of study.

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program. Beginning at least one year before a student reaches the age of majority under state law, the student's individualized education program must include a statement that the student has been informed of his or her rights under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, if any, that will transfer to the student on reaching the age of majority.

Through file review, the monitoring team concluded the district does not consistently address the transfer of rights at least one year before the student reaches 18 years old. Transfer of rights was not addressed appropriately in either of the two files which required it.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables E,G,I,J,F and N
- File Reviews
- Surveys

Meets requirements

The Wilmot steering committee concluded the district consistently and adequately considers the least restrictive environment in the process of making placement decisions for all students receiving special education services, including preschool students. The number of students receiving services in the resource room has declined over the past two years. Through the IEP process, the team addresses goals and objectives prior to making placement decisions and justification statements consistently used the reject/accept format.

Validation Results**Meets requirements**

Through file review and review of state data tables, the monitoring concurs with the steering committee findings in the area of least restrict environment.